

[ADRN Issue Briefing]

## Vertical Accountability: Ten Asian Country Cases

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In this project, we conceptualize vertical accountability in a broad sense that includes not only electoral accountability in which citizens have the power to hold the government accountable by participating through formal channels, but also diagonal accountability in which citizens exercise the power to hold the government accountable by demonstrating through informal tools. The main analytic focal points are the quality of elections and political parties for the former, and the quality of media freedom, civil society organizations (CSOs), freedom of expression, and the engagement of citizens in politics for the latter.

Based on the expanded understanding of vertical accountability, we request that country specialists of the Asia Democracy Research Network (ADRN) (1) provide a detailed account of the constitutional and legal institutional accountability mechanisms that hold the government accountable and prevent the abuse of power. Following a comprehensive description of the institutional background of vertical accountability, we request that they (2) provide an account of the performance of electoral and diagonal accountability mechanisms to see to what extent the expected institutional effects have been realized. Once the gaps between the institutional mechanisms of vertical accountability and their actual performance over time and across domains have been identified, we request that scholars (3) explain the reasons for such discrepancies and suggest both short-term remedies and long-term reforms to improve the state of vertical accountability performance.

In order to achieve these objectives, we propose the six domains of vertical accountability to investigate as follows:

- A. For the quality of elections, we ask them to evaluate the autonomy and capacity of the electoral management body, accuracy of the voter registry, intentional irregularities conducted by the government and opposition, intimidation and harassment by the government and its agents, the extent to which elections are multi-party in practice, the extent to which elections are free and fair, and the extent to which citizen's legal right to vote is restricted.
- B. For the quality of political parties, we ask them to evaluate the existence of barriers to forming a party and the extent to which they are restrictive, as well as the degree of independence of opposition parties from the ruling regime.
- C. For the quality of media freedom, we ask them to evaluate the extent to which the government attempts to censor the media and information on the internet and harass

journalists, and to assess the extent to which the media criticizes the government, presents a bias against opposition parties, provides a diverse range of political perspectives in their coverage, and self-censors on salient issues for the government.

- D. For the quality of CSOs, we ask them to evaluate the extent to which citizens engage in voluntary participation in CSOs, the degree to which the government exerts control over the entry and exit of CSOs into public life, and the extent oppresses the activities of CSOs.
- E. For the quality of freedom of expression, we ask them to evaluate the extent to which citizens are free to discuss political issues without fear of harassment, as well as the degree to which the freedom of academic and cultural expression is guaranteed.
- F. For the quality of citizen engagement in politics, we ask them to assess the width and depth of public deliberations when important policy changes are under consideration.

This report presents an analysis of the state of vertical accountability in ten Asian countries, including India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand.

### **Trends of Electoral and Diagonal Accountability: Mutual Reinforcement**

To identify the time-serial trend of vertical accountability, we rely on the V-Dem vertical accountability index and diagonal accountability index from 1960 to 2023. For the purpose of data visualization, the sample countries have been divided into two categories: (1) countries with high-quality accountability and (2) countries with middle-quality accountability. A nation is classified as a high-quality electoral accountability country if its vertical accountability score exceeds 0.8, according to the 2023 scores. A nation is classified as a middle-quality electoral accountability country if its vertical accountability score falls between 0.5 and 0.8. Likewise, a nation is classified as having high-quality diagonal accountability if its diagonal accountability score exceeds 0.8. A nation is reckoned to possess middle-quality diagonal accountability if its diagonal accountability score falls between 0.5 and 0.8.

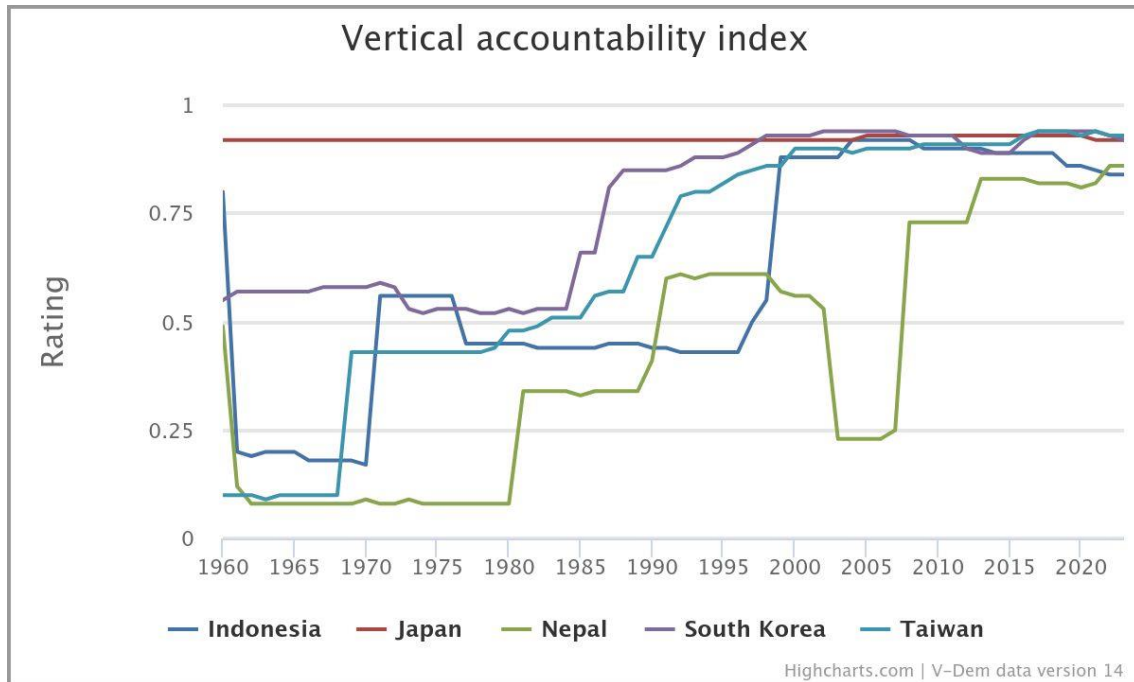
**Figure 1.** Electoral Accountability of Five Asian Countries Scoring above 0.8 as of 2023

Figure 1 represents the five countries that show the high-quality electoral accountability including Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, South Korea, and Taiwan. Japan, one of the oldest democracies in Asia, has shown the remarkable consistency in its high-quality electoral accountability since 1960. South Korea and Taiwan, which serve as exemplars of third-wave democratizers, also have demonstrated a consistent pattern of high-quality electoral accountability since their respective democratic transitions in 1987 and 1992. Indonesia has demonstrated resilience in maintaining high-quality electoral accountability since 1999, despite a recent downward trajectory in its score over the past five years. Nepal has made remarkable strides in advancing its electoral accountability toward the high-quality zone since 2008, with an ongoing upward trajectory.

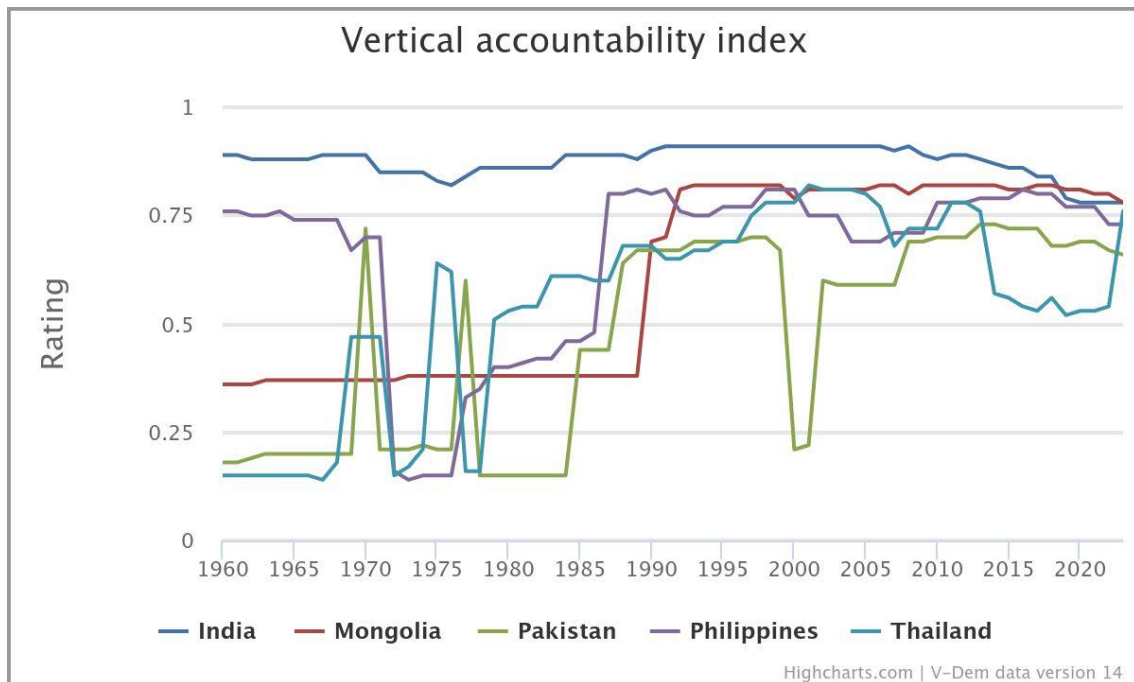
**Figure 2.** Electoral Accountability of Five Asian Countries Scoring between 0.5 and 0.8 as of 2023

Figure 2 shows the five countries that unveil the middle-quality electoral accountability including India, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. India, one of the oldest and largest democracies in Asia, has demonstrated a consistent commitment to high-quality electoral accountability since 1960. However, its recent trajectory has exhibited a concerning decline, with a notable shift towards the middle-quality zone over the past five years. Mongolia, as one of the third-wave democratizers in Asia, has shown a borderline case between high-quality and middle-quality electoral accountability performance since 1992. The Philippines and Thailand have been typically unstable third-wave democratizers, with fluctuating electoral accountability performance between the high-quality and middle-quality zones since their respective democratic transitions in 1987 and 1998. Pakistan has demonstrated noteworthy advancement in electoral accountability since 2002. Nevertheless, its position in this domain remains within the middle-quality zone.

**Figure 3.** Diagonal Accountability of Five Asian Countries Scoring above 0.79 as of 2023

Figure 3 exhibits the five countries that show high-quality diagonal accountability, including Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, South Korea, and Taiwan. As in electoral accountability, Japan has demonstrated its unswerving robustness in maintaining high-quality diagonal accountability since 1960. Taiwan has similarly demonstrated remarkable strength in maintaining high-quality diagonal accountability since its democratic transition. South Korea has shown a pattern of instability since its democratic transition within the range of high-quality diagonal accountability. Both Indonesia and Nepal have shared a downward movement of the quality of their diagonal accountability over the past decade.

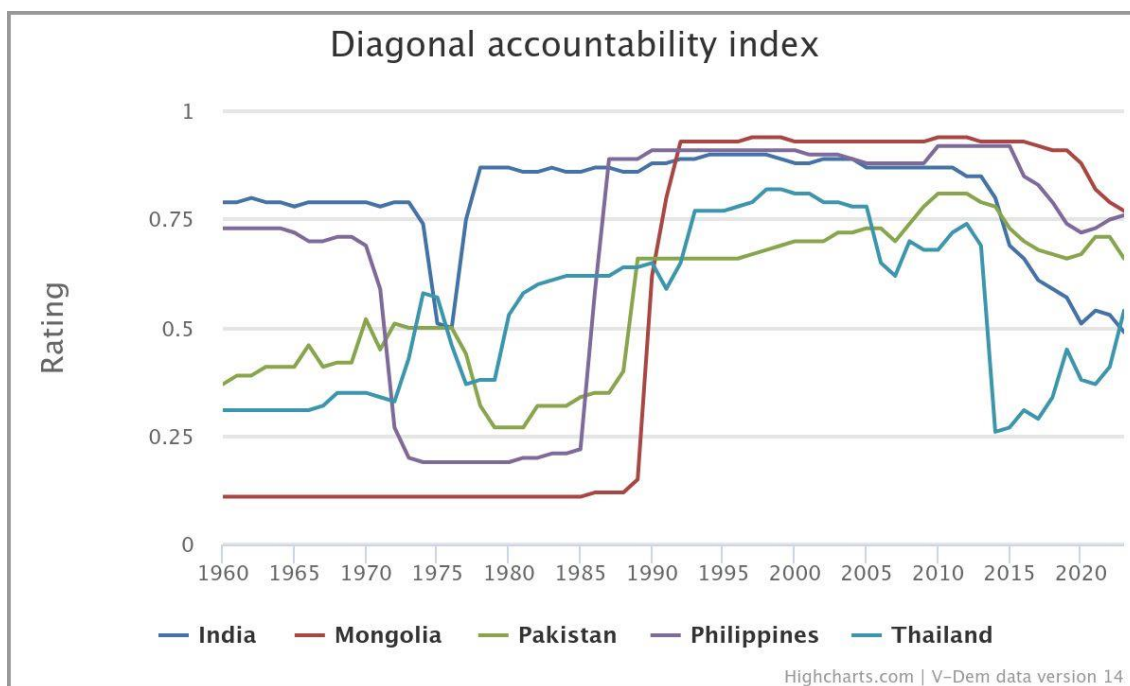
**Figure 4.** Diagonal Accountability of Five Asian Countries Scoring between 0.5 and 0.8 as of 2023

Figure 4 visualizes the five countries that have exhibited a middle-quality diagonal accountability as of 2023, including India, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. India, which had maintained high-quality diagonal accountability since 1978, began to exhibit signs of decline from 2014, approaching the threshold for low-quality diagonal accountability performance as of 2023. Mongolia and the Philippines, which had previously demonstrated high-quality diagonal accountability since their respective democratic transitions, began to decline during the latter part of the 2010s, situated precariously between the high-quality zone and the middle-quality zone. Pakistan, while demonstrating the capacity to steadily improve its diagonal accountability performance since 1996, witnessed a reversal towards the middle-quality zone from 2012. Thailand has been one of the most fluctuating cases over the past two decades, fluctuating between high-quality, low-quality, and middle-quality diagonal accountability performer status.

### Strong Associations Between Democracy Quality and Electoral and/or Diagonal Accountability

Our sample of high-quality vertical accountability countries exhibited a consistent pattern that they maintained their electoral and diagonal accountability performance within the zone during the 2010s. In contrast, our sample that exhibited middle-quality vertical accountability demonstrated a common trend of significant regression in their performance of electoral and diagonal accountability during the 2010s. It seems that confronting populist challenges and executive aggrandizement during the period, the democratic resilience capacities were weaker in the latter than the former. The divergence between countries with high-quality vertical accountability and those with middle-quality vertical accountability appeared to be correlated with the overall democratic quality of them.

**Figure 5.** Electoral Democracy and Electoral Accountability of Ten Asian Countries

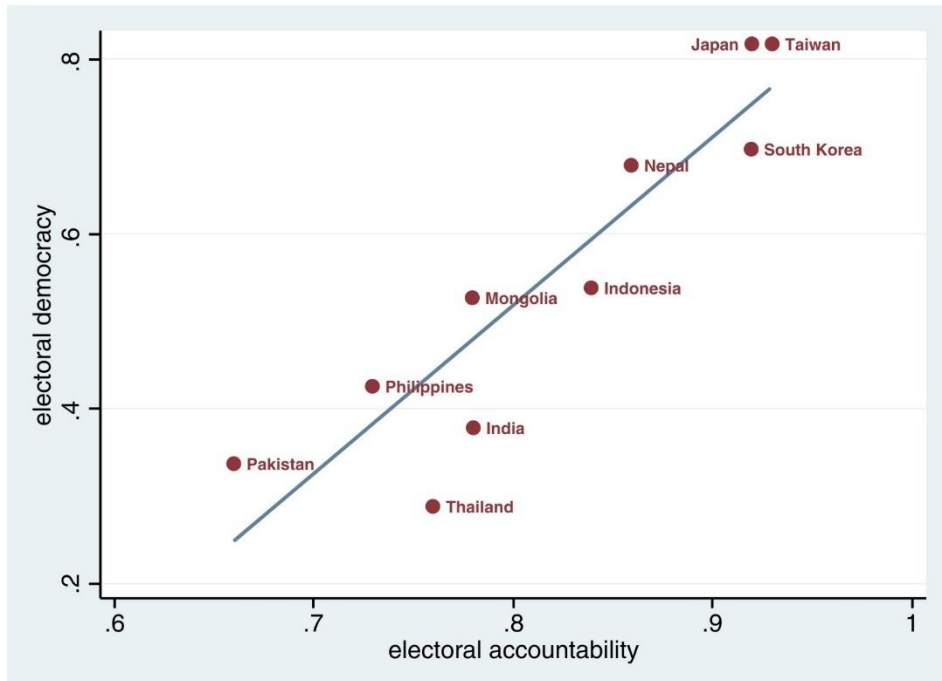


Figure 5 presents the association between the quality of democracy, as measured by the 2023 V-Dem electoral democracy index, and the quality of electoral accountability in our sample, as assessed by the 2023 V-Dem vertical accountability index. As indicated with the regression line between the electoral democracy index and the vertical accountability index, there is a notable correlation between the quality of democracy and the quality of electoral accountability.

**Figure 6.** Electoral Democracy and Diagonal Accountability of Ten Asian Countries

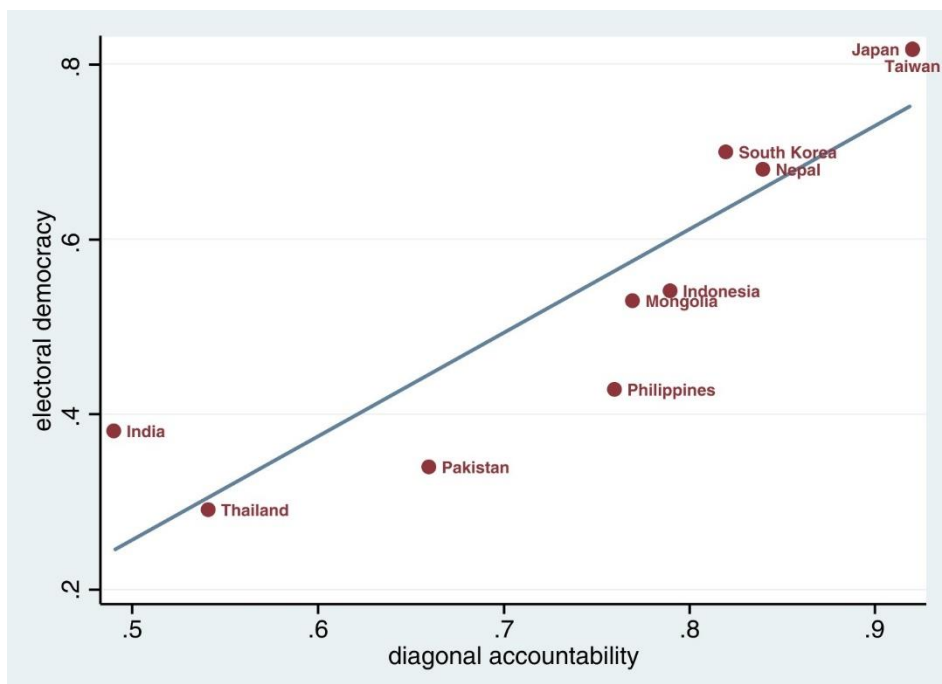


Figure 6 shows the association between the quality of democracy, as indicated by the 2023 V-Dem electoral democracy index, and the quality of diagonal accountability, as indicated by the 2023 V-Dem diagonal accountability index. As illustrated by the regression line between the electoral democracy index and the diagonal accountability index, a strong correlation can be observed between the quality of democracy and the quality of diagonal accountability.

To summarize the comparative findings, it appears that electoral accountability and diagonal accountability are mutually reinforcing, resulting in a positive feedback effect among countries with high-quality vertical accountability and a negative feedback effect among those with middle-quality vertical accountability. No countries exhibit a mixed combination in which high-quality electoral accountability is observed concurrently with middle-quality diagonal accountability, or middle-quality electoral accountability with high-quality diagonal accountability. The mutual reinforcement mechanism provides insight into the reasons behind the strong correlation between the quality of democracy and the performance of electoral and/or diagonal accountability.

### Case Studies: A Summary Report<sup>1</sup>

The ADRN scholars provides a comprehensive account of the state of vertical accountability mechanisms, an evaluation of their performance, and an analysis of the discrepancy between them. Their analysis complements the aforementioned overall accountability measurement by the V-Dem, offering specific qualitative or quantitative research.

Maiko Ichihara assessed the state of vertical accountability in Japan, raising a puzzle of why vertical accountability in governance is weak in Japan. The negative assessment of the state of vertical accountability reflected the fact that Japan is experiencing a significant political fund scandal. It is alleged that members of the Abe and Nikai factions within the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have failed to report a substantial part of income derived from political fundraising parties. As of January 14, 2024, a lower house member Yoshitaka Ikeda had been arrested, and the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office was reported to be considering prosecuting the treasurers of the two factions. Her argument is that while freedom of the press and of speech is well protected in the country, the weak political participation of citizens, or the weak exercise of ‘positive liberty,’ fails to hold politicians, the party, and the government accountable. Ichihara’s analysis indicates that Japanese citizens do not engage in efforts to challenge the state’s patronizing actions. Instead, they tend to show a low level of interest in political participation, with the general public relying on the government to address collective action problems in the public sphere. As a consequence of this prevailing attitude towards political participation, the number of people with political party affiliation is relatively low. As evidenced by the International Social Survey Programme study of Citizenship conducted in 2004, less than 5% of respondents specified their political party affiliation in response to the question, “Which party do you usually support?” The Japanese people continue to demonstrate a proclivity for engaging in public contestation or negative liberty, while lacking the will to exercise political participation, or positive liberty. Japanese concept of “the public” is largely confined to the state sector,

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<sup>1</sup> This section is based on the excerpts from the ADRN working paper series of interim reports on vertical accountability of the Ten Asian Countries.  
<http://www.admresearch.org/publications/list.php?pn=1&code=001001&acode=&cid=1&sn=s1&st=> (accessed on September 22, 2024).



which holds a dominant position over the private sector and civil society. In the context of the governing hierarchy, state actors are still regarded as the primary agents, despite the emergence of growing public-private collaboration in local governance. In a nutshell, while electoral accountability mechanisms may be effective, diagonal accountability mechanisms in Japan are relatively weak. This may be due to the fact that Japanese citizens' perception of participation does not extend beyond the boundary that can challenge the existing governing hierarchy.

Chin-en Wu claimed that Taiwan's presidential and parliamentary elections are perceived as fair and competitive. Firstly, the election commission, which is responsible for the delineation of electoral districts and the administration of elections, is basically independent. In addition, Taiwan's judiciary operates independently, as court rules are largely unaffected by political or improper external pressures. The judiciary, which adjudicates cases pertaining to vote buying, defamation, and violations of election law, is not partisan in its decision-making. Secondly, Taiwan has an automatic registration system, whereby all citizens residing in Taiwan are automatically registered to receive election notification letters several days prior to the election. This allows them to cast their ballots in a voting booth located within walking distance. The election date is routinely scheduled on a Saturday. Therefore, the cost of voting is minimal. Thirdly, Taiwanese people directly elect the president and members of parliament. The president then nominates the prime minister and may remove them from office at his or her will. The author asserts that the external threats to Taiwan's liberal democracy originate directly from China. China is attempting to use its political and economic leverage to influence public opinion and the policies of political parties in Taiwan. The dissemination of fake news is one of the strategies employed by China to exert influence over Taiwan. One objective is to influence the competition between political parties in Taiwan. Such narratives tend to denigrate the performance of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government, asserting that it has been ineffective in maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait. The second threat arises from the potential for intervention by ostensibly neutral government agencies for political gain. By strategically elevating the significance of national security surrounding elections, the incumbent government provides itself with a justification for its monitoring activities. This situation can undermine the fairness of the competitive environment and erode public trust in the impartiality of public institutions. In sum, the function of vertical accountability in Taiwan is generally sound, while there are some worrisome issues that may distort its performance, both externally and internally.

Sunkyoung Park addresses the question of to what extent the political institutions in South Korea meet the democratic norm of vertical accountability. The *de jure* quality of elections in South Korea is guaranteed by the Constitution and election laws. Firstly, the quality of elections can be gauged by the extent to which voting rights are upheld. This encompasses the existence of any restrictions on voting rights and the accuracy of the voter registry. Secondly, the democratic process of elections is well institutionalized in Korea. Thirdly, the quality of elections is contingent upon the autonomy and capacity of the Electoral Management Body (EMB). The gradual expansion of the EMB's legal authority and experience contributed to an increase in its autonomy and capacity. In 1992, a new law was enacted that allowed members of the EMB to issue suspensions or warnings, and to request investigations into violations of election laws. Both the Constitution and the Political Parties Act provide legal grounds for securing the independence of parties, by requiring that the government support parties' activities. The only barrier to party formation under the Constitution is a restriction on parties that violate the democratic order. As the initial phase of the project's objective,

Park's work has commenced with an examination of the de jure electoral accountability institutions and the de facto performance of such accountability in South Korea. The following findings are presented. The de jure institutions of electoral accountability are well-designed and secured by the Constitution and relevant laws, such as the Election Act and the Political Parties Act. The de facto performance of electoral accountability also meets or exceeds the mean values observed among OECD countries. In some cases, South Korea's performance surpasses the mean among third-wave democracies and ADRN countries. No evident discrepancies are discerned between the de jure and de facto dimensions of electoral accountability in Korea. In light of these findings, the author concludes that South Korean democracy functions effectively in both its de facto and de jure manifestations.

Devi Darmawan and Sri Nuryanti analyze the state of vertical accountability in Indonesian democracy. Since 1995, Indonesia has held elections at the national level to elect both executive and legislative members. Since 1998, Indonesia has held approximately six national elections: in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024. The regular holding of elections in Indonesia every five years has contributed to the formation of a global perspective that Indonesia is becoming increasingly democratic. However, it is evident that the electoral process is not entirely free from the influence of political elites and the incumbent president, which often results in the mobilization of executive power. Consequently, the results are far from the ideal of public interest. The government formed after the election is therefore beholden to the interests of the political party elites or the presidential coalitions. In this sense, it is challenging to ensure that the electoral mechanism can hold the government accountable, given that the formation of elected officials is more determined by the political party elites and the incumbent president. The issues facing political parties comprise of institutional aspects, including the personalization issues, oligarchy, transparency, and internal democracy. Moreover, numerous studies reveal that political parties in the reform era have been unable to evolve into public institutions that demonstrate accountability to their voters. In comparison to the preceding regimes, the New Order era saw the ascendance of parties as dominant political machines, with a greater focus on maintaining the status quo. In light of the assessment of the quality of elections, political parties, public engagement, and media freedom, it is asserted that the government should take decisive action to address these shortcomings.

In his case study of Nepal's vertical accountability, Ujjwal Sundas shows that the two major elections held after the promulgation of the Constitution in 2015 are distinctive in that they represent a mixed system of first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) with a 60:40 ratio. The PR based on the principle of inclusion is observed from the federal to the local levels. The reservations are incorporated into the electoral system itself. The scope of the reservation is extensive, encompassing a diverse array of groups, including women, Dalits, Madhesi, Janajati, and Muslims. At the presidential, Parliament, Municipalities and Ward levels, it is mandatory that the chair and deputy be of different genders. A minimum of 33% female representation is required for nearly all formal parliamentary committees, ministries, and other official bodies. Those elected at the local level are more closely connected to the public, whereas those elected at the provincial and federal levels are required to balance their accountability to the party and to the general public. It appears that elected members at the provincial and federal levels are more focused on the party agenda than on the needs of the general public. The parliamentarians are dedicated to their party leaders and are engaged in a competitive pursuit to please the party leaders in a hope of securing an electoral ticket for the subsequent stages. The party manifesto may initially appear to be quite attractive and in the

public interest. However, the maintenance of a coalition in the multi-party system/government represents a significant challenge. Hence, the party manifesto becomes increasingly diluted as the dynamics of the coalition government gain greater influence. The author proposes that the Election Commission (EC) in Nepal should monitor and regulate the increase in election expenses; The security and safety of general public needs to be effectively overseen by EC; There should be a law that would prohibit parties from forming pre-alliances before the election, as this could potentially lead to the manipulation of electoral outcomes; Voters should consciously cast vote and start questioning the elected leaders about their election manifesto along with a definite timeline; Leaders and political parties should respect the spirit of PR model and comply with the constitutional provisions.

Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay assesses the state of vertical accountability in India. Despite concerns raised by various political groups regarding the transparency and accountability of electoral processes, voter participation has consistently increased in recent elections. Indian politics has consistently demonstrated a notable degree of competitiveness and vibrancy. However, over the past decade, India has witnessed an unprecedented level of polarization among political parties. This polarization spans economic and foreign policy, socio-cultural engineering, and attempts to appeal to the diverse population based on religion, caste, ethnicity, languages, and other factors. This has had an impact on the intense competition among political parties, which has often at the expense of basic decency. In this context, the role of the Election Commission as an independent and impartial institution is of paramount importance in restoring a sense of decency in electoral competition. The recent amendments to legislation pertaining to the appointment and governance of the Election Commission have been perceived by many as an attempt to render the Commission susceptible to the whims and fancies of the incumbent administration. In this context, the rule of law alone may prove inadequate for maintaining the integrity and neutrality of the Election Commission. The rule of law must be complemented by a sense of morality and values based on democratic principles. The Supreme Court's annulment of the electoral bond scheme has also resulted in a policy vacuum with regard to the future of political funding. In conclusion, it is recommended that as the new government is formed in the next couple of months, one of the priorities of Parliament should be to facilitate extensive consultations among political parties, businesses, and civil society to develop a transparent and accountable mechanism for financing political parties and election campaigns.

Mina Sumaadi and Ganbat Damba estimate the extent of vertical accountability in Mongolia. One main aspect of electoral politics in Mongolia is the discrepancy between the constitutional establishment of a multi-party system and the subsequent adoption of a mainly majoritarian electoral system. This has led to a two-party and a prolonged period of one-party dominance. The Mongolian People's Party (formerly the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party) had inherited considerable institutional and financial advantages in the new system and remained the dominant political force. This is an exceptional case among post-communist party systems, wherein the former communist party successfully rebranded itself in the democratic era and remained in power. A further aspect of the elections and political parties in Mongolia that bears upon vertical accountability is the lack of public scrutiny of party platforms and electoral campaign promises. The records in question have limitations in terms of the temporal scope of their availability, which precludes a comprehensive evaluation of their content. Furthermore, there is a lack of incentives for those in power to document their actions, so unsurprisingly there are no studies verifying whether politicians fulfill their promises. In a nutshell, despite changes in government composition, the scope for genuine political contestation

has narrowed with regard to electoral accountability. This has resulted in the prevention of the emergence of a real opposition. Likewise, diagonal accountability is also in decline, with watchdog institutions weakened by financial constraints and legal restrictions. Meanwhile, the expansion of government control over public communication is impeding media independence, while financial instability is reducing the efficacy of civil society.

Francisco A. Magno, Anthony Lawrence A. Borja, and Jeuny Mari D. Custodio assess the quality of vertical accountability in the Philippines. In the Philippines, political parties frequently prioritize the narrow goal of providing a partisan platform for candidates seeking election, rather than mobilizing the public in pursuit of coherent policies and programs that will benefit the general population. Consequently, candidates are selected based on their ability to command patronage resources and their perceived ability to win elections, rather than on their solid commitment to distinct governance values and principles. The weak party system in the Philippines has encouraged populism and eroded the system of checks and balances that are vital for a healthy democracy. Given the lack of ineffective disciplinary structures within political parties and politicians including legislators, typically align themselves with the party or allied parties of the winning presidential candidate. This contributes to the decline of legislative oversight and the promotion of executive aggrandizement. Overall, authors argue that the Philippines is a defective democracy that is more oligarchic than democratic. They contend that this has resulted in an accountability deficit, whereby government officials are not held sufficiently accountable for their actions, leading to abuse and corruption. From a historical and structural perspective, this can be linked to the long-standing rule of oligarchs whose sense of accountability is based more on their relations with one another (e.g., inter-elite patronage) than on their constituents. They illustrate that in addition to the constraints inherent in the electoral and political party systems in the Philippines, there is a value system that affords leaders greater autonomy and less accountability as public servants. The authors posit that to address the prevalence of personality and leader-centric politics, as well as the dominance of patronage and clientelism in the Philippines, political reform requires the development of a political party system that unifies leaders and citizens under a policy-oriented framework for electoral politics.

Parin Jaruthavee analyzes the vertical accountability in Thailand. The 2023 election in Thailand is reported as one of the elections in which there was a considerable expectation of change. Furthermore, many have anticipated advancements in transparency, accountability, and other democratic principles. It is evident that the Constitution, as a foundational legal document, holds a significant position in shaping the democratic society; however, like any other law, the Thai legal system is confronted with the question of whether it serves as a mere instrument of oppression or justice. Indeed, a legal system, in and of itself, is insufficient for ensuring a fair and equal society. Consequently, both the law and its practical application must be subjected to rigorous examination with a view to not only enhancing the efficacy of the legal apparatus but also to elevating the level of electoral accountability that the people have aspired to. The Constitution, the supreme law of the land, has been subjected to criticism for its undemocratic design. This has resulted in the prevention of opposition parties (any party other than the pro-military parties) from forming a government, despite having secured a majority of the votes. Rather than facilitating the transition to democracy, the Constitution has served to consolidate the authority of the military, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and other independent organs, while simultaneously curbing the influence of elected politicians, major political parties, and those opposed to the military. This Constitution has played a significant role in

impeding the development of democratic institutions in Thailand. With this Constitution in place, the most viable course of action, as Jaruthavee posits, is not to amend the Constitution, given the potential for the amendment process to span years and to be intervened by several factors. Instead, she suggests encouraging people to participate and exercise their political rights to the fullest extent possible, although within the confines of certain political processes. Conversely, government agencies and organs shall operate and function in accordance with the law, not merely as the law states, but also to uphold the rule of law, which is the fundamental principle of democracy. The law alone cannot guarantee a fair and equal society; therefore, amendments of the law alone are not enough, but the law in practice matters. Thus, the organizations with the ability to enforce the law must do so in a lawful and just manner.

Alena Sadiq evaluates the current state of vertical accountability in Pakistan. Her work makes clear that the continuation of military intervention from behind the scenes precludes the flourishing of democracy and robust vertical accountability in Pakistan. However, while the gap between the institutional ideals and the political realities appears to have increased in recent years, two recent developments inspire cautious optimism. Firstly, the judiciary appears to be resisting external pressure, as evidenced by a letter written to the Supreme Court by six judges of the Islamabad High Court, which alleged the interference of the military establishment in judicial decisions. The letter alleged that intimidation and blackmail were used to influence the judges in question. An investigation into these allegations is currently underway at the Supreme Court. The second development that inspires optimism is the visible opposition of the public to military interference in democratic governance. The limited but notable victory of Imran Khan's party, despite significant obstacles, provides insight into the prevailing public sentiment. To further build on these developments, the following short-term remedies and long-term solutions can help strengthen democracy and vertical accountability in Pakistan. The short-term measures seek to strengthen the integrity of the electoral process, rebuild public trust, and boost public participation. Concurrently, the long-term solutions establish a common agenda for uniting political parties in pursuit of a democratic path forward. In the absence of a long-term and unwavering commitment on the part of political actors to strengthen vertical accountability — i.e., elections and political parties — Pakistan's democracy will remain susceptible to autocratic tendencies and remain in a state of fragility. A vibrant political party landscape, coupled with genuinely free and fair elections, empowers the Pakistani electorate to hold governments accountable and begin to build further accountability structures, such as horizontal and diagonal accountability frameworks. Integrating these accountability structures into Pakistan's democratic system will lead to a more robust and healthy democracy.

## Conclusion

The comparative studies on the vertical accountability of the ten Asian countries, as well as the intensive case studies on each of them, demonstrate that the quality of democracy is critically dependent upon the quality of vertical accountability performance. This review confirms that the two mechanisms of vertical accountability, namely electoral accountability and diagonal accountability, are mutually reinforcing. It can be observed that in countries with high-quality vertical accountability, such as Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, South Korea, and Taiwan, electoral and diagonal accountability work in a mutually reinforcing manner to protect the quality of democracy. In countries with mediocre

vertical accountability, such as India, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand, electoral and diagonal accountability work in a mutually reinforcing manner to impair the quality of democracy.

The practical implications of these findings are important in the era of democratic backsliding. These include the following: (1) strong political parties and/or vibrant CSOs are the essential organizational assets to prevent democratic backsliding from occurring; (2) constitutional protections of freedom of the press or expression and activities of engaged citizens are part and parcel of preserving the integrity of elections; and (3) improvements in electoral accountability quality require improvements in diagonal accountability quality and vice versa. ■

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